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Loudoun County School Board, Curriculum and Instruction Meeting, Monday, October 2, 2023

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- Official meeting video (Vimeo / LCPS-TV): <https://player.vimeo.com/video/870667810?rel=0>
- BoardDocs (School Board): <https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/loudoun/Board.nsf/Public>

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[00:00:00] good evening I call to order this Monday October 2nd 2023 curriculum and instruction committee meeting the first item on our agenda is number two public comment and we have no one signed up for public comment today so we will pass over that item and the next item on the agenda is item number three approval of the minutes can I please get a motion to approve the draft minutes from the September 11th meeting I move to the committee approve the minutes from the

[00:00:32] September 11th, CNI meeting. Second. Seconded by Ms. Ogudegbe. Any discussion? Seeing none. All those in favor of approving the minutes, please raise your hand and say aye. Aye. That motion will pass unanimously. And that will take us to our action items. Tonight we have one, 401 policy 5060, textbooks furnished free.

[00:00:57] So I will ask staff if there are any updates, any significant public comment or anything else that they wish to Thank you, Mr. Strachan. We are bringing this policy back as an action item tonight. It has been in front of the CNI committee on June 5th and August 28th of 2023 as an information item. During the August 28th CNI meeting, there was discussion amongst the board around the charging of fees for consumable materials that are used as the primary instructional resource.

[00:01:25] Based on that feedback, we have added a line in the policy for your consideration lines starting Starting on line 18, under consumable materials, we have added the line students will not be charged for

consumable materials, which are used as or associated with the primary instructional resource for the class.

[00:01:53] Beyond that, there's no additional changes since the last time the committee reviewed the policy. Thank you, Mr. Slevin. Can you tell me -- I know there was -- staff was doing an analysis to see what, if any, the cost impact would be of adding that line into policy.

[00:02:08] So was there any identified cost impact or anything that would be in the FY25 budget for that? We worked internally within the Department of Teaching and Learning and also with the Budget Office, and we didn't have any significant concerns.

[00:02:23] It's had a few exceptions, such as the music books that we've discussed in the past. So would this cause any existing consumables or instructional materials to be covered where now students are paying for those?

[00:02:38] we would we would likely take a look at our music programs but we already had intended to take a look at those materials and the process for which we could go through to adopt materials for those particular courses thank you board members any questions regarding the changes to this the recommended changes to this policy seeing none I move that the curriculum and instruction committee approve revised policy 50/60 textbooks furnished free and forward it to the

[00:03:16] full school board for review and approval seconded by seconded by miss Rieser any discussion on the motion seeing none all those in favor please raise your hand say aye aye that motion will pass unanimously and we'll now move to our one and only information item 501 from the chief academic officer capacity and class size dr. Ellis thank you mr. Sorokin so this evening we have

[00:03:50] a presentation for you that was jointly put together from various departments and I have with me this evening the level directors Nettie Gonzalez sales Gus Martinez and Elaine Lehman from the school leadership team I have Bev Tate from the planning office and Casey Jones from business and finance and they will all be helping me go through several questions that have come up from different board members and after conversations with a couple of you we decided we would put all of this together in one presentation to be able

[00:04:28] to have a conversation about it so on the next slide you'll see a list of the topics that we will discuss miss Tate will talk a little bit about base building capacity we'll talk about class size and staffing standards and then there was a specific question about the impact of the teacher shortage on class size and staffing standards that we'll address slide three is a list of definitions I won't read those to you because each of the experts across the

[00:05:04] table from me will talk about each one separately so with that I will turn it over to Bev Tate to talk about building capacity actually I will read those the top two are directly from the CIP document for this meeting's presentation I am going to reference the school board adopted FY 24 capital improvements program that's a resource that you have the public has and so everything I'm speaking to is based off of last the adopted budget but we do calculate a base building capacity which is the number of students who can

[00:05:42] reasonably accommodated in a school based on the number of classrooms the specialized programs and the student teacher ratios when we look at building utilization they kind of go hand-in-hand for us and so that's the percentage of the total school capacity that is being utilized or used I shouldn't be using the word in the definition but we are here but certainly if we have a school that is at 80% utilization

there is capacity available for additional student growth but if we have a school that it's 125 percent capacity then that school is full because it exceeds the capacity that we have calculated for it

[00:06:19] next slide please so again I've put that same definition here I could have moved on to this slide but we annually each fall we're actually in the midst of that right now we go out to each school we determine what spaces they're using for what programs this year you're well aware we've added four more modular classrooms to Willard so we're adjusting that capacity for the school because we have four more modulars there and we do all of this in advance of any attendance own process in any capital in advance of the capital improvement budget being

[00:06:56] presented to the board in November next slide please this is a snippet out of the document trying to get it all on one slide again base building capacity we look at the number of classrooms at the elementary level and in this instance we always multiply that for the general education by 23 students special education special programs we multiply by 10 and that excludes rooms for mandatory like art music fusion that we don't calculate in capacity at the

[00:07:31] middle and high school level we have a similar mathematical exercise where we calculate 21 students per classroom at the middle school level 23 at the high school but then we use a utilization factor it allows for flexibility and scheduling particularly for classrooms that may be French five where you would not have necessarily a full enrollment of students again that the special education programs and the smaller classrooms we multiply those at 10 so everything that is calculated is then utilizes a 90 or an 85 percent utilization last year i will

[00:08:09] just remind the board as part of that secondary boundary process we went and we looked at our older high schools we looked at all of our secondary schools and the schools that had in excess of 25 of their classrooms falling below the state standard and class size we wanted to recognize that and so our four oldest high schools broad run loudon county loudon valley and parkview we calculate 85 utilization factor to allow for that variance because of their size next slide please this one i'm referencing pages 71 and 79 of the document as to what is the base capacity

[00:08:48] for each school that is listed there i've done snippets there of the document we do not calculate base capacity for the academies allowed in the north star school r2 charter schools or william Obadiah Roby next slide please there was a question of what schools are over capacity for this past school year we only had three schools that were over capacity based upon us looking at the enrollment on September 30 and the utilization and the capacity calculations that we calculate each fall

[00:09:26] so Brambleton Middle School was at a hundred and thirteen percent utilization you are well aware that we address that over utilization because they have an annex at Independence High School Willard Middle School was over utilization by 106 we added modulars to that and then this year we've added additional modulars and then Loudoun County High School was at a hundred and eleven percent utilization we have since the board did some attendance own changes for Loudoun County High School and so that was to address that over utilization but all other schools fell in under that hundred percent capacity

[00:10:06] calculation sure I'll take this slide thank you there was a question about how do we address schools that are over capacity and it's a slightly different approach at elementary versus middle and high so elementary when a grade level has reached the maximum capacity for example in grades kindergarten first second and third 25 if there are no additional spaces in the school building then the students would be

regionally assigned to another building regional assignment is guided by its own policy as you see there and at middle

[00:10:43] and high would you like to speak to that so it's a little bit different at the middle in high school when the building reaches maximum capacity we don't assign regionally we work with facilities either in the form of learning cottages or an annex at a school which you've all seen and then there's a difference when a teacher reaches the maximum student limit but I believe that we talk about that in another slide as well do you want me to take the next one so sure so this is just a reminder the difference between class size the class size refers to the number of students in a given course class size maximum are

[00:11:20] outlined in policy 5080 and then staffing capacity otherwise known as a teacher load is what I was talking about before are based on the Virginia standards of quality 25 to 1 this is that this is no I can state and local

[00:11:57] standards for class size yes okay so for kindergarten as it stated is 24 to 1 with 29 students and there's an average and Elaine's was a lot of time moving things around when it goes above that to make sure that the schools fall into place next we have 24 to 1 in grades 1 2 and 3 with no classes being larger than and 30 it's pretty much the standard and for middle for a fourth grade through sixth grade it's 35 students the SOQs the SOAs talk about 24 to 1 in English

[00:12:32] in grades 6 through 12 which we use an average but if we want to make sure that that's maintained it a certain way then we'll need to look at the staffing standard to look at that and then in policy it also talks about what the the largest class sizes so for middle school is 35 and high school is 40 for certain courses but we'll get to that in another slide staffing standards are a critical component of the budget they were first introduced in FY 16 and showed up in the FY 17 budget book they maintain maintain equitable staffing

[00:13:09] across our large and diverse division provide transparency consistency and predictability in the budget and for our employees and ensure compliance with the state's standards of quality we have several types of staffing standards we have ratios such as physical education teachers in elementary schools one per 14 classrooms district-wide we have tiered such as the elementary reading teacher where schools less than 450 students get one schools with 450 to 749 get 1.5 reading teachers school 750 to 999 get two and schools over 1,000

[00:13:47] students get 2.5 we also have division-wide averages that affect departments that are not school-based, such as service desk engineers that are assigned at one per 3,000 LCPS employees. Today, we have over 200 staffing standards that account for more than 87% of total LCPS employees. What's the difference between class size and staffing standards?

[00:14:13] They're actually mutually supportive. Class size policy, 50-80, establishes the maximum number of students per teacher in a general education class. The staffing standards are how the school board enacts that policy through resources. As an example, policy 5080 establishes a maximum class size for grades 4 through 5 of either 29 or 31 students, depending on if you're looking at the current or proposed revisions for that policy. The staffing standards for grades 4 through 5 that the school board recently approved staff at 1 to 22 students, and then in both scenarios,

[00:14:49] teacher assistants kick in at upper levels. Taken together, this ensures that the school division has the appropriate resources in order to staff according to the class size policy next slide and are we

within the approved staffing standards yes we are compliant recall that staffing standards are predominantly a budget tool which is why under policy 4120 management of funds the school board requires that a position control system be in place to ensure we do not exceed authorized FTE we have both process and technology tools in place and

[00:15:26] implemented and as we validated as recently as this morning the FTEs that we are tracking match what has been approved by the school board I'll take this this is almost a repeat of the question that we addressed earlier but if the question was presented what happens when a class goes over the approved class size and at this time at the elementary level there are no classes in Loudoun County that are over the school board approved class size maximum based on policy 50/80 but if a school was at capacity and at risk of exceeding the approved class size students at elementary would be regionally

[00:16:03] assigned. I can share that the high school it fluctuates throughout the year depending on the marking period whether student stays in a course or drops or changes or at the semester we do have some that are over at this time and they're over because of teacher shortage or they're over because the classes are very small in world languages and they need their level threes to get their accreditation requirements and graduations for diplomas so there there are fluctuations and we do have some over and per the current policy they

[00:16:37] do ask for permission and teachers are paid accordingly if they go over 150 or teach six blocks all right so this is a slide about the teacher shortage so this year kind of upended our regular processes because instead of deciding whether there was room to add a teacher there were no teachers to add there was no one out there to hire so because of what mr. jones was talking about in terms of our staffing standard is at 22 but our class size maximums are well above that so that we're always adequately staffed so at elementary we

[00:17:14] collapsed 32 classrooms because of lack of candidates to fill those positions but we were able to do that and still remain within our staffing standard our class size maximums we did that six schools and eighth grade levels required teachers assistants to do so because they were in the range of numbers of students that required an additional teacher assistant and the other schools were able to do so while still remaining under the max class size without a teacher assistant because of the generous staffing standard that we use at the middle school teachers should go above what we spoke about before known

[00:17:49] as a video teacher load received tiered stipends if you are above 150 students you received a stipend depending on how many students you have except for art and music the video e allows up to 200 students at both high school and middle school teachers can receive an extra block to teach or complete a full schedule as an itinerant teacher and this last slide just lists important or relevant policies and documents for you to consider that we've mentioned in the presentation and mr. Sorotkin I'll turn it back to you and the group is happy to

[00:18:28] answer any questions thank you dr. Ellis and thank you thank you team for being here I really appreciate the overview view and I really appreciate how many different departments are here today to answer what sometimes very complicated regarding staffing standards building utilization and class sizes committee members what questions do you have for the team miss Rieser thank you mr. chair just a couple of quick questions does building utilization include space that is used for something other than teaching building utilization is based

[00:19:08] on classrooms we do not calculate capacity utilization based off resource spaces or work rooms or teacher lounges if that's what you're asking I think my confusion is all of the terms in both of the first two definitions were used interchangeably as you were explaining so I'm trying to understand why we need maybe a different way to ask is why do we need the two different measures they seem so closely related so capacity determines the number of spaces that are potentially available and utilization is a percentage of that it's it's your

[00:19:47] calculation right how what percentage of those spaces is being used and so it is all just classroom based it's not about other spaces I just wanted to make sure I understood that correctly thank you my next question was why don't we calculate these numbers for the academies I can make some guesses about some of the other programs or spaces but why not the academies we could certainly do that we we we've started collecting how they're utilizing their

[00:20:24] space we just there's um we could do that well I guess I was just more I'm don't know why I don't know why it is is the answer to that somewhere maybe within how we use that information like if we had that information for the academies or even for our current numbers that we do have what kinds of decisions do we make what do we change what do we do based on this data so my hunch would be that with the academies you have welding let's say and so there are probably a certain number of students who could enroll in the welding

[00:21:01] program and so that program could expand if there was additional capacity I would offer at the elementary middle and high school level what may be a kindergarten class right that's a bad example what could be a third grade classroom this year if you find that you have more fourth graders the next year those classrooms are interchangeable I believe that the academies is a little bit more of a unique school and you can't simply go in and say I'm taking a culinary arts classroom and turning it into a welding classroom so perhaps that is why we don't calculate it at the academies that's not to say that we couldn't come up with a calculation that said in general it could serve but I

[00:21:41] think the uniqueness of the program offerings kind of does change that how we look at it. Ms. Gonzales-Sales, do you want to weigh in there? Thank you, please. That makes perfect sense. Thank you. Yes. So the academies, it will be fully built out at the end of this year. And so it's finite. The number of spaces they have, the number of seats per program. For example, certain CTE courses can only have 20 spaces because of OSHA. Certain labs have certain spaces. And even for AET and AOS, the class sizes are finite. And so we know from year to year what their enrollment unless unless they don't enroll to capacity but that hasn't happened right

[00:22:21] so I I hear you and and the spaces are not fungible in the same way so I mean I'll defer to the other committee members to weigh in on that but if there's no benefit to collecting that data I wouldn't necessarily advocate for that I was just curious as to whether there might be or why we haven't so thank you for the answers. Additional questions? Thank you. Ms. Gonzales-Sales, you mentioned something when we were talking about the staffing capacity and the Virginia Standards of Quality,

[00:22:55] and you mentioned that we use an average, but can you elaborate on that? There's been an average used for the English of 1 to 24 in forever, and I think it's a good opportunity to look at that and see how we can ensure that instead of an average, it is what it is, if we have that opportunity and the budget to do so.

[00:23:20] And is that only impacting English classes? The English is the only one where the state says it's a 1 to 24, and the other ones, it doesn't give that number. I'll just restate.

[00:23:36] So we're only using averages when it comes to the English classes. Okay. Thank you so much. Okay. Let me, well, let me ask my general questions first. first you know six years ago when I first decided like hey I might want to do this crazy school board thing like large class sizes was my primary reason why so the fact that we're we're here six years later and only three of our 98 schools are over 100 percent capacity is such an enormous

[00:24:11] improvement over where we were five or ten years ago that I just want to extend my appreciation for how how hard LCPS has worked to try and catch up and lower class sizes and reduce over capacity as best we could we still have a couple of a couple of areas of high growth within the county and we've certainly noted that but it's just a night and day difference from where we were back then and I wanted to make sure I noted that how many middle school teachers do we have that are above the video we teacher what is it called teacher load who are

[00:24:47] but I just I have no I have no frame of reference if it's you know 5% of our teachers or all of our teachers how many are above that load believe it or not it used to be years ago where where I don't have the exact number and I can certainly get that to you tomorrow actually with the figures of what it costs per teacher but we have been reducing that number more and more the more that we work with principals on their master schedule and the more that we have put certain criteria in order for a teacher to receive a stipend for example if I teach English 6 and Elaine teaches English 6 and I'm asking for a stipend for me I audit the master schedule to make sure that there's no

[00:25:23] other teacher in that building in that subject area or grade that has below 150 otherwise we move students so we have made quite a dent in not using as many but I'll get you that the exact number for you okay thank you and then so the the the the I guess my driving question I hope for why this ended up on the agenda was something we had noticed I and other school board members during special permission appeals over the last couple of months where it was specifically for Kenneth Culber and I'll just use that as the example because it

[00:25:58] was the most glaring case, where I was told in the appeal packet that the third grade class at Kenneth Colbert was at 105% or 110% of capacity, just in broad terms.

[00:26:16] And I started scratching my head because I knew that the building capacity or building utilization for Kenneth Colbert was below 50%. So even accounting for grade-to-grade variations, there's just no way that any individual class would be 75%, much less above 100%.

[00:26:36] So what I realized as I started digging into this is that there were multiple sets of numbers where there's the building capacity and the building utilization, but then there's also how many teachers are assigned to the school, and at what point does adding additional students make you have to incur additional cost by adding another teacher, even if you have multiple empty classrooms at that building where you could fit more students in.

[00:27:06] so I really thought that merit because I started having to bring my CIP book to special permission appeals so that I could reconcile all of these different sets of numbers and I thought it merited a discussion around which sets of numbers it's most appropriate to use specifically during those appeal hearings when we're trying to figure out exactly how crowded the building is or not so that's where I

started from and I wanted to make sure that coming out of this we had cut consensus for the the way that that data is going to be presented to the appeal committees in the future to make sure that everyone's

[00:27:43] walking working from the the same set of numbers so I'm not sure that there's already been some staff discussion on that in preparation for this but I'd definitely be interested in thoughts and and areas of improvement for how we can have more consistent numbers there going forward or at least numbers where everyone's in agreement as to what those numbers mean because elementary is so closely involved in the special permission process more so than middle or high I would love to speak about this we provide those numbers and we don't talk about building capacity we talk about classroom capacity grade level capacity at the elementary level every school every grade level based on the

[00:28:23] number of teachers assigned to that grade level 95 words but special permission policy indicates that we can go to 95 percent with a special permission student but we usually on appeal it's usually the board usually takes it to a hundred a hundred percent so for example three third grade teachers at with the 25 students in each class a hundred percent would be 75 95 percent would be 72 students and the reason it's 95 percent in the special permission policy is so that we leave room for any students that might move into the attendance zone we find ourselves faced with a very interesting timeline when special permission happens as we're approving special

[00:29:02] permissions fairly early in the season and families are still moving in throughout the summer special permission policy prohibits me and you from adding staff to a building to accommodate special permission so when a when a school is nearing that 100% capacity that's why we leave it at 95 and then if nine special permission children are approved and then we're at 72 and then three four move in now we're over now I can give staff because they're for move-ins but they're really because we approved nine special permissions and and took the room so it's interesting how the timing all works out with that

[00:29:37] but we we provide those numbers and we only talk about classroom and school capacity grade level school capacity okay thank you I am I'm interested to hear what what my colleagues have to say on this topic also I think from from my perspective and sitting in on those appeal hearings I would definitely want to know what both sets of numbers were so that I can see it's basically staffing capacity versus building utilization so I know that let's let's say I'll make up an example so let's say there is

[00:30:16] there there is physical room in a building for six third grade classrooms but we have three third grade teachers and we have 24 students per class so the building utilization just ignoring all the other grades the building utilization is going to show as 50 because you have three occupied classrooms and three empty classrooms the staffing capacity is going to show at 100 because for the three teachers that you have they all have full classes so when I am deciding

[00:30:51] whether I want to incur that additional cost it's important for me to know whether there's a class or even if I add a teacher whether there's a classroom for them to go in or not or whether it's going to cause a regional assignment issue by saying, you can add teachers all you want, but there's no classroom for them to go, so they're going to have to be regionally assigned.

[00:31:14] So that's where I'm coming from as far as my perspective on it. But I'd love to hear it. Ms. Reeser. I agree with that. I think that that would be very useful. I mean, I think that should be present at every special appeals hearing, like Mr. Sorokin said.

[00:31:33] but I I also wanted to ask I didn't quite hear you said policy what policy prevents us from considering special permission but movements are different did not special permission thank you for asking the clarifying question the special permission policy says that it cannot cost the school division additional money to approve the special permission so the addition of a of a A SECTION OF A GRADE LEVEL IS BY DEFINITION INCURRING ADDITIONAL COSTS.

[00:32:05] AN ADDITIONAL FTE. CORRECT. OR TEACHER. CORRECT. AND BACK TO MR. SOROTKIN'S POINT AND QUESTION, BE WILL SPEAK TO THAT FOR A MINUTE, BUT THE STAFFING, THE ORIGINAL STAFFING, THE THREE CLASSROOM TEACHERS THAT WERE ASSIGNED TO THE SCHOOL, IS A RESULT OF THE PROJECTED ENROLLMENT.

[00:32:22] SO IF THE PROJECTED ENROLLMENT INDICATES WHEN USING THE STAFFING STANDARD MR. JONES TALKED ABOUT 22 STUDENTS, IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE GOING TO NEED THREE TEACHERS. why there's three teachers it has nothing to do with there's six classrooms available so and if that makes any sense if as you can see there are many moving parts to this equation so my second question was with regard to our special permission policy have we ever considered including some phrasing or just the practice of reserving some spaces for children that may move in yes

[00:32:58] that is the 95% so we approved special permission to 95% to leave space that was I believe the original intention of that but sometimes those appeals are granted and we go over a hundred percent so then those children have to go somewhere else correct so is there the opportunity to approve them to like do you see what I'm saying so if a if a committee of school board members is going to approve a student that puts that school at 101% those students that later move in do they ever get a shot at asking for an exception to be made they don't need to

[00:33:35] ask for an exception if there is space no if there's not space I mean if there is space to add a classroom not space in the addition in the existing classrooms and I live in the attendance zone yes then staff can be added because that right now special permission students can be added even when there isn't space to add an extra special permission yes and what I'm asking is if you have students that move in later during the summer right do they have any kind of review at the school board level or by anyone else that can okay so that's something there's no physical space at the school to add a section you mean do

[00:34:11] they have any means like to bump somebody out we can add someone when there's no physical space if they're appealing special permission but if someone has a right to go to that school because that's where they moved we have not created a process by which they can ask for that exception to your Craig exactly so I I think that's only fair for the board to consider doing I agree I agree it merits discussion but I think what you're talking it would have the effect because we're talking about where there's no space left in the building so if it would up for someone who lives in zone to get approved it's gonna bump someone else out well or overcrowd which is what we're doing with special

[00:34:50] permission appeals that we grant yes right so if we're doing that for students that don't belong there I think it's only fair to have a process for families that move into that school zone having no idea that there's not actually space for their child and that has happened I mean I've heard from from families that were very disappointed that their child now had to go to school somewhere where none of the neighbors live for a home that they chose to move into sometimes because of the school they're zoned for.

[00:35:20] So our special permission policy is actually hurting those families. So I think it needs to be addressed somehow. Something to consider in addition to that happening as a result of the timeline, the

special permission timeline. It could also happen with no special permissions approved, just with schools that are over capacity, like, you know, at Helvetter where we had the kindergarten issue and things like that.

[00:35:44] So the question would be whatever the process is, would it work just in a situation? then you'd be going over max class size by board policy. So all of that needs to be considered. And that's a really good point, but certainly in the first instance, we're creating that situation. So I feel as if we're responsible for thinking about solutions for it.

[00:36:07] Additional discussion? Ms. O'Kadekbe. Go back to the slide that references. It asks if we're above capacity, and it starts by saying no.

[00:36:24] No, it like starts with, I feel like it's before that.

[00:36:56] it's not showing on there who's got the so so we were so the question being are we within the approved staffing standards and I'm assuming we mean by staffing standards the LCPS staffing standards correct and I understand at the

[00:37:33] elementary school yes but I thought I heard that at middle and high school we sometimes are over and and staff get a stipend and that at the high school level there's some flex because of specific classes so can we get numbers at the middle and high school level of where we are not within the standards because I think the answer is yes for elementary and not necessarily for middle and high school so I think would be helpful to get those specific numbers

[00:38:11] we can certainly do that for you one thing I'd like to add to that question as well ma'am the staffing standards are the number of FTE that are approved within the budget so we have not exceeded the approved FTE that the school board has given us so we are compliant with the staffing standard I believe your question is regarding SOQ teacher caseload or teacher ratios yes got it yes exactly thank you any additional discussion no all right thank you again for the great conversation around staffing standards and class

[00:38:49] sizes very much appreciated that will bring us to item six on the agenda new business is there any new business tonight I will just mention we have so this is the October meeting so we have two more curriculum and instruction committee meetings left this term so I can't imagine any committee members have waited this long but if there are any outstanding topics for this committee that you've not yet requested to be on the agenda but you have a burning desire to add to the agenda before the end of the year please let either Dr. Ellis or

[00:39:25] Mr. Slevin or myself know and we will try and work it into the schedule and as we have no further business we are adjourned thank you



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